

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA DURING
THE SAFE HAVEN YOUTH-CENTRED MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE
PROGRAMME AT FUSION BOUTIQUE, POLOKWANE MUNICIPALITY,
CAPRICORN DISTRICT

10 OCTOBER 2026

Programme Director,
Members of the Provincial Legislature,
Safe Haven Management and Partners,
Young People of Limpopo,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ndi Matsheloni, Inhl'ekani, Thobela, Good Morning, Goeie Môre!

To the dreamers, the innovators and every young person who has ever
smiled in public while silently fighting a battle within, I greet you all.

Today, we gather for a purpose greater than a programme. We gather to
affirm a fundamental truth: your life matters, your voice matters and your
mental health matters.

For too long, we have told young people that they are the leaders of
tomorrow. But tomorrow is too far away for a generation confronting
unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, peer pressure, cyberbullying,
academic stress and the uncertainty of what lies ahead. Young people do

not only need promises about the future; they need support, opportunities and hope today.

We cannot expect young people to build a better tomorrow if they are struggling to survive today.

As the Limpopo Provincial Government, we recognise that empowering young people means more than creating opportunities for education, employment and entrepreneurship. It also means creating an environment where they can speak openly about their struggles, seek help without fear and access the support they need to thrive.

Programme Director, mental health is not a conversation we should whisper about behind closed doors. It is a conversation we must bring into our homes, schools, workplaces, churches and communities.

We live in a world where young people are constantly expected to prove themselves. Social media presents carefully edited pictures of success, beauty and happiness, making many feel that their own lives are somehow inadequate. Some are battling the pressure to succeed academically, others are desperately searching for employment, while many carry the weight of family responsibilities and financial hardship.

Behind the laughter, there may be anxiety. Behind the silence, there may be depression. Behind the anger, there may be pain that a young person does not know how to express.

Let us be clear: experiencing mental health challenges does not make you weak. It makes you human. Asking for help is not a sign of failure; it is an

act of courage. And seeking professional support should never be a source of shame.

To every young person here today, please understand this: you do not have to carry every burden alone. You do not have to pretend to be okay when you are not. Your circumstances do not define your worth, and your current struggles do not determine your entire future.

Programme Director, this is why initiatives such as Safe Haven are important. A safe haven must be more than a name; it must be a place where young people feel seen, heard, respected and supported.

We commend Safe Haven for placing young people at the centre of mental health awareness and support. We encourage the initiative to continue building bridges between young people, mental health professionals, families, schools and communities.

However, mental health cannot be the responsibility of one organisation alone. Parents must create homes where children can speak without fear. Teachers must recognise when learners are struggling. Friends must learn to listen without judging. Communities must challenge stigma and government must continue strengthening access to appropriate mental health services.

Sometimes, helping someone begins with a simple question: “Are you really okay?” But we must go further than asking. We must listen to the answer, offer support and help connect those who need assistance with appropriate professional services.

To our young people, I also want to challenge you to look beyond yourselves. If you have found the courage to seek help, encourage another person to do the same. If you notice a friend withdrawing, struggling or losing hope, do not dismiss their pain. Reach out and help them access support. Never promise to keep a serious safety concern secret; involve a trusted adult or qualified professional when someone may be in danger.

Let us build a generation that understands that strength is not measured by how much pain we can hide, but by our willingness to confront challenges and support one another.

Equally important, we must connect mental wellness with youth empowerment. A young person who is mentally supported is better positioned to learn, innovate, pursue opportunities and contribute meaningfully to society. Education, skills development, employment opportunities and entrepreneurship must go hand in hand with psychosocial support.

We want young people who are educated and emotionally resilient; ambitious and compassionate; confident in their abilities and unafraid to ask for help when they need it.

To the young people in this room, do not allow unemployment to convince you that you are useless. Do not allow rejection to persuade you that you are unworthy. Do not allow someone else's achievements to make you doubt your own journey. Your path may be different, but your life still has value and your contribution is still needed.

As we leave this gathering, I urge you to engage actively with Safe Haven. Learn about its programmes, use the available support, participate in its

activities and help spread the message that mental health deserves the same attention as physical health.

Let us build communities where seeking help is normal, where compassion replaces judgement, and where no young person feels they must suffer in silence.

Young people of Limpopo, your future deserves your presence. Your dreams deserve your effort. And your life deserves to be protected.

Let us break the silence, confront the stigma and create spaces where every young person can find support, rediscover hope and realise their full potential.

Together, let us make Safe Haven not merely a programme we attend, but a movement we carry into every school, every home and every community across our province.

I thank you.